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he was always a jobber; but this assertion was doubtless prompted by personal ill-will, and it must be taken with large allowance. Still, it is clear that Burke's hands were not entirely free from stains, and that the suspicions which attach to his pecuniary dealings are not wholly unfounded. It would be a gross perversion of language to say that he was ever bribed; but his relations with Lord Rockingham were certainly not those which should exist between statesmen. Nor are the circumstances attending the purchase of Beaconsfield so easily explained as some of his eulogists have contended.

ART. IV. — *Writings of THOMAS DE QUINCEY.* Boston : Ticknor and Fields. 1854 – 59. 21 vols.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY is a man of mark and power, who has silently grown, out of the costly toil of nearly half a century of culture and literary achievement, to his present high rank and intellectual proportions. As a thinker and a scholar he has few living equals; as a literary artist he is without a rival. He has traversed with more or less profundity of insight and research the grandest provinces in the empire of human speculation; and his familiarity with metaphysics, and the subtle distinctions involved in them, is so close and intimate, and his expositions are so elaborate and lucid, as almost to produce the impression that we are holding converse with a mind contemporary with the aboriginal secrets of nature.

This remarkable man was born at Greenhay, then a suburb of Manchester, although now densely populated, and absorbed, indeed, into the arterial life of that city. His father was a merchant of high standing, exclusively engaged in foreign commerce, and possessed of a considerable fortune. He died when De Quincey was seven years old, leaving him and his five brothers and sisters to the care of four guardians, with an income of £ 1,600 a year. His mother was one of those high-born dames who belong of right to the olden time

of England, and are now very rarely to be met with even in the best society of that country. Her manners were courtly, and she stood firmly by her rank; holding no intercourse with the menials of her house, save through a goodly matron who had the general charge of its economy. She was, in the legitimate sense of the word, an "intellectual" as well as a pious woman, and had the highest sense of honor and propriety in all things. De Quincey speaks of her in terms both of reverence and of affection, and remembers her counsels and admonitions in long-after years, when she is in the grave, and he fighting in an "Iliad of woes."

Notwithstanding the means at her command, she conducted her house with a wise prudence and watchfulness of expense; although she amply provided for the elegant enjoyment, culture, health, and happiness of her children. She trained them to a Spartan simplicity of diet, and they fared very much less sumptuously than the servants. "And if," adds De Quincey, — "if (after the model of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius) I should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of my early situation, these four I would single out as worthy of special commemoration; — that I lived in a rustic solitude; that this solitude was in England; that my infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters, and not by horrid, pugilistic brothers; finally, that I and they were dutiful and loving members of a pure, holy, and magnificent church."

The solitude in which his childhood was passed very powerfully affected his subsequent life, deepening the naturally solemn tone of his mind, and coloring his entire character. He marks, indeed, all the events which occurred to him at this early period in such emphatic and startling outline and detail, that they assume dramatic proportions, and, taken in connection with his after years, stand there like portentous heralds, ushering a dire tragedy upon the stage. They recur in all his experience, and are alternately accessories and principals, amid the awful scenery of his dreams; the key, in fact, which alone unlocks the portals of his opium creation, and renders its apocalypse intelligible. He was precocious and premature, and seems to have known no childhood. The eye of consciousness was always open and

full-orbed within him; and thoughts, too big for entertainment, although not for transient visitation, haunted his mind continually, and shook him with unspeakable trepidations. Solitude was not good for him, nor yet the exclusive companionship of his sisters, notwithstanding his proclaimed gratitude for these privileges. He relates circumstances in connection with the death of his two eldest sisters which, however incredible they may be to persons of common experience, as trespassing upon the very boundaries of the supernatural, are yet deeply interesting as illustrations of the natively morbid constitution of his mind; for we maintain that his tendencies to opium had an organic origin, as these narratives duly pondered may sufficiently prove.

When he was about one year and a half old his sister Jane, aged three and a half, died; and the event to him was not, he says, so much sorrowful, as unintelligible. He had no idea, could form no conception, of death in its essential mystery and calamity. Little Jane had disappeared, but how, or wherefore, he knew not. "I was sad for her absence; but still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again, — crocuses and roses; why not little Jane?"

The feeling with which he thus associated the return of crocuses and roses with the possible return of his sister, will, in one of such tender years, scarcely admit of philosophical explanation, unless, indeed, we refer it to intuition as its source. The idea which underlies this floral analogy appertains to the profoundest mysteries of man's nature, — to resurrection and immortality, — and could not consciously, therefore, without some preternatural and unheard-of gift of insight, belong to the mind of an infant. That the return of the flowers, however, was, in a symbolic sense, associated in his mind with the reappearance of his sister, he is fully persuaded. But this is not all. Jane, during her illness, had been intrusted to the care of a nurse who was impatient of the child's complainings, and treated the little thing with unnecessary, if not cruel harshness. The rumor of this treatment spread naturally through the house, causing much talk among the servants, and thus reaching the ears of

De Quincey, who pondered it in his heart, brooding over it night and day, as something awful, and altogether foreign to his own nature and conceptions. He had known nothing up to this time but the pure delights, the love and the beauty of childhood, and could have no suspicion of the taints of sin in that holy atmosphere which surrounded him. But now, and gradually, the dim consciousness that he "was in a world of evil and strife" painfully oppressed him; and he dates that "passion of sorrows" which consumed the subsequent period of his childhood from this revelation.

Strange and inexplicable as all this may probably appear to the reader, De Quincey not only believes it, but upon it — and the other and more important experience into which this minor one runs, carrying with it the full inflection of its feeling — he builds, as we have stated, the entire system and machinery of his visions.

The supplementary experience alluded to was derived from another mournful spectacle of mortality. His eldest surviving sister, Elizabeth, a girl of marvellous intellect, whom he loved with all the affection of his sensitive and confiding nature, died after a brief illness, from disease of the brain, when he was about six years old. She had been all in all to him, and his love for her amounted to an almost religious idolatry. Her death, therefore, affected him with emotions of grief and anguish corresponding to the depth and measure of his love. He felt what it was to be alone; for his soul was desolate, and his young life was suddenly hung with funeral gloom. And now mark what follows; for it is in every way important to the proper understanding of his development and career, as well as intensely interesting in itself, in a purely psychological aspect. The day after his sister's death, he resolved, in his intensely excited state, to visit her corpse, and with this purpose he stole unperceived into the silent chamber where it lay. The window was "wide open, through which the sun of midsummer, at midday, was showering down torrents of splendor. The weather was dry, the sky was cloudless, the blue depths seemed the express types of infinity; and it was not possible for eye to behold, or for heart to conceive, any symbols more pathetic of life and the glory of life." From the

gorgeous sunlight he turned to the corpse, and gazed long upon the frozen eyelids, "the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of closing anguish." And as he gazed, "a solemn wind began to blow—the saddest that ear ever heard. *It was a wind that might have swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries*"; whose "hollow, sad, Memnonian, but saintly swell," he calls "the one great *audible* symbol of eternity"! Then, in his own words, "a trance fell upon me. A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up for ever. Frost gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death seemed to repel me; some mighty relation between God and death dimly struggled to evolve itself from the dreadful antagonism between them. I slept—for how long I cannot say: slowly I recovered my self-possession; and, when I woke, found myself *standing*, as before, close to my sister's bed." This strange apparition, amidst the solemnities of death on the one hand, and the beauties of summer on the other, conjured up by the breathings of that mighty wind, is in itself—considered as a psychological manifestation produced under the pressure of profound grief and intense imaginative excitement—quite as wonderful, startling, and suggestive, as anything to be found in the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater."

The presence of great and exciting circumstances, however, although in the instance alluded to they were doubtless the immediate causes of the vision, was not at all essential as operative or condition, in the ordinary dreamings of De Quincey's childhood. His mind seems to have been in a state always bordering on ecstasy,—especially after the death of his sister; and "trailing clouds of glory" attended his outgoings and incomings, like some surpassing heavenly pageant. He loved solitude and silence. "The awful stillness oftentimes of summer noons, when no winds were abroad, the appealing silence of gray or misty afternoons,—these were fascinations as of witchcraft. Into the woods, into the desert air I gazed," he says, "as if some comfort lay hid in *them*. Obstinate I tormented the blue depths with my scrutiny, sweeping them for ever with my eyes, and searching them for one angelic face that might, perhaps, have

permission to reveal itself for a moment." His deep grief consumed him as with Promethean fire. The natural, beautiful, and most mysterious intuitions of childhood, which give glory and supersensuous meaning to the grass and the flowers, to clouds and sunlight, to solitude and the song of birds, were very vital and vivid to De Quincey, and, aided by his imagination and the dream-faculty, enabled him to live in the splendor, if also in the sorrow, of more than mortal experience. Sorrow is distinguished from grief by its submission and repose. Grief in her has been transfigured by faith and love; and hence her divinity, and silent, irresistible power. De Quincey had not yet, at least, known sorrow in this sense; his was "rapacious grief, that grasped at what it could not obtain." And yet under its influence "the faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements, and grouping them after the yearnings of his heart," grew upon him in morbid excess. He gives in the "Suspiria" a magnificent picture of this faculty, whose more than Titian splendor of outline and coloring would vanish by mutilation, and it is too long to quote entire. The subject is his Sunday morning dreams while in an old English church, "having aisles, galleries, organ, all things ancient and venerable, and the proportions majestic."

It is remarkable that these scenes, and the drama of his childhood, are continually recurring in his after life and his writings; and he gives us affecting proofs of their abiding power in his "Autobiographical Sketches."

As soon as he was old enough he was sent to school, passing from one school to another, with very little discretion as to the choice on the part of his guardians. He made most proficiency, however, at the Bath Grammar School, where he had the advantage of an Etonian master, under whose instruction he achieved a rapid progress, especially in Greek, which he wrote at thirteen with ease, and spoke at fifteen as fluently as his mother tongue. Alluding to this remarkable acquirement, his master once said to a person with whom he was conversing, "That boy could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I an English one." He had a natural gift for this language, and he obtained his mastery over it—

so far as knowledge of words and their structure is concerned, although not in the high sense of criticism — by extensive reading of Greek writers, by compositions, and the daily translation of English books and newspapers into the Attic tongue. The last public school to which he was sent was the Grammar School at Manchester, then presided over by a “clumsy and inelegant,” though a respectable scholar. He could teach De Quincey nothing, however; and being now seventeen years of age, and having long and unavailingly desired his guardians, who had quarrelled with him, — or with whom he had quarrelled, — to allow him sufficient funds to support him at college, he resolved that at all events he would be a school-boy no longer; that he would work his way to London, in short, and try the doubtful, and even, when successful, ruinous experiment of borrowing money for his college expenses of the Jews. During one of his vacations he had been invited by Lord Westport, then a young man about his own age, to spend a few weeks with him in Ireland; during the visit he made what might be called an intimate acquaintance with Lady Carbery, — a name familiar to all readers of Jeremy Taylor; and to her he now applied for the loan of five pounds, without telling her for what purpose the money was wanted. A few posts brought him an answer, and an enclosure of ten pounds, and with this sum he ventured to abscond, and cast himself adrift upon the world, bending his steps towards North Wales. He wandered through various parts of the Principality, — meeting with some curious adventures by the way, — until his resources were nearly exhausted. He suffered much from hunger and exposure, often sleeping out of doors at night, until he finally found himself in London, penniless and alone.

Here he became acquainted with a lawyer who was a sort of jackal to the Jews, to whom, although he received no pecuniary relief from him, or through him, he was nevertheless indebted for shelter, and an occasional crust, which, if it were not given to him, he did not scruple to take from the lawyer's breakfast-table, as the occasion served. The shelter afforded to him was that of a large house, uninhabited except by one poor, lonely, and friendless child, — a little girl about ten

years old. She was also hunger-bitten, as well as ragged and desolate; for her master — if he were not her father, as he probably was — utterly neglected her, never sleeping in the house, and, indeed, often changing his lodging for purposes best known to himself, and very scantily providing her with food and clothing. Great was her joy when she found she was to have a companion to make the loneliness of that empty house less fearfully dreary. For superadded to her great and touching physical misery was the appalling fear of ghosts, which in the silence of the night — broken only by the unearthly noise of rats in their infernal revels — haunted the mind of the poor, weak child with perpetual and inconceivable terror. And so at night they lay down together, their pillow “a bundle of cursed law papers,” their covering a “large horseman’s cloak,” or fragment of a worn-out rug. He speaks of the tumultuousness of his dreams at this time as scarcely less awful than his subsequent opium dreams. He was attacked also by a “twitching” sensation in the region of the stomach, which was horrible to bear; and the result was utter prostration both of mind and body. In this mysterious house De Quincey spent the nights of many weeks; he a “famishing scholar,” with no other companion save a neglected child, whom “I loved,” he says, “because she was the partner of my wretchedness.” His days were passed, for the most part, in the parks and street-wildernesses of the mighty city.

Misery touches springs in the human heart which open infinite depths of sympathy, and reveal to us how mighty and far-reaching and wide-circling are the roots of our common nature. For man, wherever and under what circumstances soever he may be placed, is still man; and the highest and the lowest are bound together by the common ties of blood and primordial ancestry, by the traditions and history of the common race, and by the spiritualities and profundities of the common human nature. And even in cases of sad profligacy and crime, purity herself has no right to withhold the words of love and consolation, and the promises which God himself has vouchsafed to the repentant sinner. We will not hesitate, therefore, to unfold one more scene in the revelation of De Quincey’s waking visions and experience of London misery,

although it is not one of which we should voluntarily have chosen to speak. It is, indeed, all-important, in its issues, to De Quincey's history; for in the absence of the chief actor in this scene he would have had no subsequent history at all, but would have perished upon the stage.

In his street wanderings he had become acquainted — not with any impure purpose, but by accident — with an unfortunate girl, known to him only by her Christian name of Ann. She was not more than sixteen years old, and pacing with her up and down Oxford Street, he learned her story. She had been cruelly treated, and robbed of her little property by a villain who seduced her, and then turned her out of doors. De Quincey was to have gone with her, and spoken for her to a magistrate, and this was arranged between them, but destined never to take place. In the mean while, the following touching scene occurred, which will show how fearfully hunger, and its accompanying symptoms and consequences, had seized upon his constitution, and how all this was silently preparing the way for the advent and mission of opium to him and his experience. We quote De Quincey's words: —

“One night, when we were pacing slowly along Oxford Street, and after a day when I had felt unusually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho Square. Thither we went; and we sat down on the steps of a house, which, to this hour, I never pass without a pang of grief, and an inner act of homage to the spirit of that unhappy girl, in memory of the noble act which she there performed. Suddenly, as we sat, I grew much worse. I had been leaning my head against her bosom, and all at once I sank from her arms and fell backwards on the steps. From the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction of the liveliest kind, that without some powerful and reviving stimulus I should either have died on the spot, or should at least have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all re-ascent, under my friendless circumstances, would soon have become hopeless. Then it was, at this crisis of my fate, that my poor orphan companion, who had herself met with little but injuries in this world, stretched out a saving hand to me. Uttering a cry of terror, but without a moment's delay, she ran off into Oxford Street, and in less time than could be imagined returned to me with a glass of port-wine and spices, that acted upon my empty stomach (which at that time would have rejected all solid food) with an instantaneous power of restoration; and for this glass the

generous girl, without a murmur, paid out of her own humble purse, at a time, be it remembered, when she had scarcely wherewithal to purchase the bare necessities of life, and when she could have no reason to expect that I should ever be able to reimburse her."

It is moving to see, as in this instance, how the human heart, great in its lowest condition and circumstances, great to the last, vibrates at the touch of misery to the old melody in which it was originally tuned by God, — the melody of heaven's own tenderness and love, whose mighty breathings sustain the burdens of humanity and are the very pulses of its life. And this is especially the case in woman, whose nature, being more finely set and harmoniously adjusted than that of man, is, on this account, more sensitive to impression, and more beautiful and touching in its passionate responses, its marvellous heights and depths of affection. God has mercifully ordained that sin itself shall not be omnipotent in its malevolence; but that earthly glories, bursting even from the ruins of the human heart, shall have power to mitigate its austerity, and to illuminate its baleful darkness; — not to speak of that mightier and supernatural glory, which, as through a shaft sunk from heaven to earth, and to its lowest abysses of pollution, streams for ever, in sublime symbolism, from the blood and passion, the agony and the triumphs of Calvary. Otherwise, sad indeed would be the lot of man upon this earth. Sad it is, at the best; but hopeless it is not.

Shortly after the scene in Soho Square, above described, De Quincey chanced to meet a gentleman of the King's Household who had known his father, and had received hospitalities at various times from his family. He challenged him on the strength of his family likeness; and De Quincey confessed all to him, on condition that he should not betray him to his guardians. The next morning he received a ten-pound note from this gentleman, and with the money he resolved to go to Eton, and try to interest some of his patrician friends there to aid him in getting to the University. After fruitless applications to these noble persons, and also to more ignoble Jews, he is finally reconciled to his guardians, and commences his University career. Those who desire to know the history of his intermediate adventures, and how he parted from Ann,

and lost her for ever in the chaos and darkness of London, may find them written in the "Confessions," and Ann's story, at least, a tragedy of tears.

Taking into consideration his original nature, the precocity of his childhood, his indigenous dream faculty, and the wondrous waking visions which haunted his nursery days, — his extreme *Æolian* sensibility to natural objects, — to love also, and pity, and the passion of sorrow, — a sensibility which is the very aroma of feeling, and which coarser and more healthy minds cannot so much as imagine, — considering all these things, we perceive at once his predisposition to opium-excitement. Living as he did in a world of emotions and imagery far removed from actual life, it was no wonder that, when he came into contact with life, his mind should shrink from its savage and terrible reality, as from something unholy. When, therefore, he found that through the instrumentality of opium he could not only indulge in his Oriental dreams at pleasure, but multiply them in extent, number, and voluptuousness, he readily fell into its lures.

His "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," in which he describes the effect of this drug upon his mind, burst upon the world like a new Apocalypse; and such indeed it essentially was. For no one before him had ventured to proclaim his experience of this power; and few were ever gifted with such faculties of analysis and description as he possesses, even had they been inclined to be thus venturesome. Amid the darkest and most shadowy regions of his imagination, however, before whose dread and solemn pageantry the heart of man shrinks appalled, as if it were orphaned and alone in some universe of woe abandoned by God, he walks with philosophic calmness. He is familiar with the colossal scenery of the spiritual world; looks down with clear and steady eye into bottomless starry gulfs; and walks unscathed amid solar systems and burning planets, trampling, under arching galaxies, the aisles of measureless space, surrounded by all the vast, un-built magnificence, the cathedral pomp of the universe. It is his privilege to wander thus, the Alone with the Alone, and hold therewith his awful and unspeakable communions; — his privilege, and also his punishment; — a sublime punishment, which

words cannot picture, under the immensity of whose grandeur even an archangel might stagger ; and which he can support only by the agency of that dreadful magician whom he apostrophizes as “just, subtle, and mighty,” to give and to sustain. That magician, as we have before seen, is Opium ; and herein lies the secret of his preternatural power, the splendor of his visions, his divine ecstasies, his satanic agonies. He has bartered the normal condition of his great and marvellous faculties, the natural health and vigor of his mind and body, for an abnormal, clairvoyant state, in which the soul magnifies the phenomena of nature, and incorporates them with its own feelings and images, until the universe becomes one mighty consciousness of inconceivable rapture and pure intellectual blessedness, or of the most appalling gloom, horror, and despair. All his experiences are sublime and vast ; attended in their history and progress by unearthly accessories, by beings of an unknown creation, of an undistinguishable sex ; — now sweeping through cloud-lands of fire and splendor, and anon through regions of tumultuous, unimagined darkness.

Words, indeed, are altogether inadequate to paint the scenery and companions of this mighty dreamer’s march through the regions of the imagination. He, himself, with all his opulence of language, and power of description and coloring, does little more than to suggest the fiery outline, leaving the reader to fill up and frame the interior picture as he best may. Never before, however, were such bold and vivid limnings of gorgeous visions traced by pen or pencil ; and the wonder of the performance is expanded and deepened by the profound spirituality with which he invests them. They are but shadows projected by the soul, which thus seeks to give expression to its surging aspirations, and to absorb time, space, the universe, and God in its own immense existence.

In a purely psychological sense, how intensely interesting are these preternatural, fire-wrought experiences, and what new, strange, and startling speculations do they suggest ! Here is a man who possesses the secret by which he can and does live in a state of unutterable splendor and glory, both of intellect and feeling, alternating with unutterable gloom and terror : this last, however, not the necessary product of any

forces of the mind reacting from a previous beatific condition, but resulting from causes over which the agent has, in the first instance at least, an absolute control; inasmuch as they spring only from an excessive abuse of the enchanted drug, and need not constitute the staple, therefore, of the opium-eater's dreams, or form any part of the phantasms of his visions. So at least we gather from the "Confessions"; for De Quincey says that for ten years he "lived on earth the life of a Demiurgus, and kept the keys of Paradise."

One dread epoch, however, there seems to be in opium experience, as the result of its long-continued use and excessive abuse,—and that is the termination of all splendid scenes and visions, and the commencement of an eternity of gloom and cryptic horror; peopled by dreadful human faces, shadowy, pursuing hands, and fiendish forms of Miltonic bulk, longitude, and deformity.

In the atmosphere of opium, and with this full, final, and fatal experience of its operations, De Quincey's life has been passed. His writings are everywhere stained with its colors, and flame with its illuminations. Nor does he regret his acquaintance with it, but rejoices over it rather, as a new inlet of power, and an introduction for him to occult scenes and knowledge, hidden to merely mortal eyes behind the veils of the universe. He mourns, it is true, over his *abuse* of its bounteous gifts, but he lays no guilt at the threshold of that dark abode which it inhabits. Nor does he impugn its veracity or integrity, or pretend that he has been cheated by any false promises which it held out to him. What it professed it performed, under the sole condition that he should use it for love, and not for lust. If he violated this condition, he must accept the penalty; and accordingly he is just to its character, by proclaiming that the accumulated agonies of his later mental and physical existence were but the result of his own voluntary transgression. This, however, if true, which we vehemently doubt, is but an individual experience, and an exception to the known dealings of opium with the human mind. It is commonly a cheat and a liar; mocking misery with a brief delusion, and crime with a brief oblivion, as if the prince of darkness himself had brought the

accursed drug to man in order to disturb by its subtle working the harmony and economy of God's government of the world. For even while it heightens the moral perceptions, and augments, as in De Quincey's case, the grandeur and intensity of the moral aspirations and of the intellect, it paralyzes the will, and makes the living man a powerless corpse.

It was in the year 1804, during one of his University vacations, that, being distracted with toothache, he first took opium as a palliative. The scene of this irreversible step was a druggist's shop in London; and he relates all the circumstances with the minuteness of a Pre-Raphaelite, throwing over them also the air and the coloring of a profound mystery, unwilling, as he says, to connect any mortal remembrances with the hour, place, and creature that first brought him acquainted with the celestial drug. And under its influence he sought for pleasures of a purely æsthetic and intellectual nature. Grassini sang at the opera in those days, and thither De Quincey went, feasting his soul with melody such as Mahomet never dreamed of in the atmosphere of his enchanted paradise, — melody which built up for him palaces of inconceivable splendor, and surrounded him with a new creation of feeling, intellect, and imagination. He mixed also on Saturday nights with the poor, lingered in pure sympathy over their marketings, and heard all their disappointments, hopes, and rejoicings, in the same spirit of unalloyed human love. Or he wandered for hours and miles, absorbed in contemplation, through the thoroughfares and Sphinxine labyrinths of London.

It was in solitude, however, that he sought and obtained his most serene and elaborate pleasures. Often he has sat for hours in delicious reveries; and "more than once," he says, "it has happened to me, on a summer night, when I have been at an open window, in a room from which I could overlook the sea at a mile below me, that I have sat from sunset to sunrise, motionless, and without wishing to move."

In 1812 De Quincey is living at Grasmere, in the companionship of Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, and has become acquainted with Professor Wilson. Here, in his

pretty cottage, — once occupied by Wordsworth, — with the lake at his feet and the mountain heights and woods behind and around him, he studies, in his library, consisting of some five thousand volumes, the metaphysics of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling; or he revels in the dream phantasies and imaginative wildernesses of Jean Paul. We see, indeed, in all his serious writings, how deeply he has been affected by German thinking and literature; although he never for a moment drops his own individuality, or bows his regal intellect before the kings of these mighty revelations. He is their peer and equal. And at this period he has no conception, he says, of the avenging terrors which opium has in store for those who abuse its leniency. Hitherto, he has been a dilettante opium-eater, of eight years' practice certainly, but always allowing time for the system to recover, partially at least, from one debauch before he commenced another. He has taken opium like a man of science and an artist; but in the middle of 1813 he is attacked by that horrible gnawing of the stomach, which flung him into such sleeping and waking agonies in the great, lone house in London, before he had tampered with opium at all. This sensation, originally induced by extreme hunger, now returns to him, and will yield to nothing but opium constantly exhibited.

From this time laudanum entered regularly into the articles of his daily consumption, and was consumed by him, for the next three years at least, at the rate of eight thousand drops per day. Suddenly, about the year 1816, he descended from this enormous quantity to one thousand drops per day. Twice he broke loose from the thralldom altogether; and the struggle which he made to effect this is one of the most heroic in its progress and triumph to be found in the records of human agony. Again, however, he tumbles into the abyss, and arrives at last at an "Iliad of woes." At night, as he lay in bed, vast processions moved along in mournful pomp; friezes of never-ending stories that to his feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were stories drawn from times before *Œdipus* or *Priam*, — before *Tyre*, before *Memphis*. He descended nightly into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that he should

ever reascend. Nor did he by waking feel that he had reascended. Buildings and landscapes were exhibited in proportions more vast than the bodily eye is fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. All the incidents of his childhood and entire life were ever recurring to him. His life had many lives, and he was familiar with death, and eternity, and all the dreadful retributions of God.

Such, in imperfect outline, is the story of De Quincey's opium experience. He now lives in a village about twelve miles from Edinburgh, and makes occasional additions to the numerous volumes which his collected Works at present comprise. That he should have effected so much under the pressure of such mental horrors as we have described, and the disadvantages of pain, suffering, and that lethargy, and often utter impotence, of volition and action which opium induces, is little short of miraculous. This lethargy, however, alternates with periods of great activity, and De Quincey seems to have taken advantage of them. There is no sign of decay visible in any of his later productions, which is also marvellous. He is as vigorous as ever.

We have no space left to enter upon a critical examination of his writings with a view of ascertaining his body of thought and opinion, and assigning to him his true historical position. This is, however, a work to be done; although the fragmentary character of his compositions, scattered over so wide a field of inquiry, will render the task somewhat difficult. He has no great work to which we can point as his *Opus*, and by which he can be judged. He lies, broad and vast through these volumes, *dissecta membra* of colossal proportions, which require to be gathered up, as we said, and put into human fashion. But no living man has written, on so many questions, so much and so well. He knows many things, and all of them thoroughly, so that he has always a wise word to speak concerning them. He is a mathematician as well as a metaphysician; he is not only a philosopher, but equally an accomplished and profound logician. He delights in the higher geometry, and loves to face those abstract truths upon which Nature rests, with all her forces,

creatures, powers, and empires. He has studied with a critical eye the philosophy of Plato and Kant; of Aristotle and Bacon; and he is a master in the science of political economy. Long before Ricardo had published his "Principles of Political Economy and Taxation," — that is to say, earlier than the year 1811, Ricardo publishing in 1817, — De Quincey was in that field. And it is singular, as evincing the nature and elasticity of his mind, that he took to the study of political economy as an *amusement*, at a time when his intellect was weakened and broken by his opium excesses. He read all the books and miscellaneous writings on the subject which nearly two centuries had produced, in hope of finding some ray of light to illuminate the dark foundations of that science. But he found authors, and pamphleteers, and parliamentary debaters, alike ignorant of its first principles, — their productions "the very dregs and rinsings of the human intellect," — and he turned from them in disgust. At last Ricardo's book appeared, and before he had finished the first chapter, "I said," he writes, "'Thou art the man!'" He saw at once the worthy claims of this new candidate for honors, who "had deduced, *à priori*, from the understanding itself, laws which first gave a ray of light into the unwieldy chaos of materials, and had constructed what had been but a collection of tentative discussions into a science of regular proportions, now first standing on an eternal basis."

This book made an epoch in De Quincey's mind, and he gave an exposition of its principles in a paper called "The Templar's Dialogues," which is one of the finest pieces of reasoning in the language. "He who has fully mastered the doctrine of Value, is already a good political economist." These are his words, and this doctrine is the subject of his elucidation. Arid as the subject is, he has made it interesting, and even attractive, by his genius and matchless colloquial power. He turns from it with perfect ease to descant on "The Theory of the Greek Drama," "On the Poets of England," and "On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts," or he asserts his manliness and hatred of cant, somewhat preposterously, indeed, by a philosophical apology for war.

Indeed, on whatever platform he appears, he always makes

some original and genuine contribution to the discussion. As an historian he has given hints of unrivalled powers, and it is much to be regretted that he has not devoted himself to some great section of ancient or modern history. He infuses the breath of life into his characters; and the scenery which surrounds them glows with natural beauty, is atmospheric, and sunny with the golden light of day. His "Revolt of the Tartars" leaves nothing to be desired as a dramatic representation of a great and affecting historical event. It is instinct with life, and the portraiture of fierce passions, agonies, and tragic results. Nor can anything be finer than his imperatorial history of "The Cæsars," in the course of which there are many indications of neglected difficulties, which ought not, as he elsewhere says, to have been left unremoved to any one in the nineteenth century.

He excels also as a biographer, and is perhaps, from his long study of and intimate acquaintance with the subject, the only living man who could write a life of Milton. His papers on classical subjects, "The Sphinx's Riddle," for example, are not only learned and philosophical, but they often elucidate the hidden meaning of the symbolism of mythology from a deeper insight than any other writer, with whom we are acquainted, has attained. This is, perhaps, natural to him; for his genius is cryptic, and instinctively reads the ciphers and hieroglyphs of dark and mythic things. Whatever possesses mysterious and sublime features and lineaments is also peculiarly attractive to him. His creative faculty is so active and suggestive of phenomena, that he fills up the most shadowy outlines of such mysteries with the form and pressure of bodily reality. His paper "On the Revelations of Lord Rosse's Telescope" is a case in point. The nebulae of Orion, discovered at last in those fearful distances which separate them from the solar system and all mental conception, assume in his eyes the shape of an apparition, abominable and utterly revolting. His mind is populous with this kind of creation; and also with that of beauty. Witness his "Dream Fugues," suggested no doubt by Jean Paul's essays at Dream Creation, and other analects from his writings, but far superior to them as to art, in the superb chastity and beauty of their finish. Richter, indeed, loses

the dream character of his effusions in the elaborate details with which he crowds them; while De Quincey in this most difficult of all the forms of composition, rendered so from its floating subjectivity, never fails in his effect, because he seizes upon the great features of the drama, and centres all the interest of evolution upon them. Jean Paul and De Quincey divide between them the kingdom of our dream literature.

As a moralist De Quincey takes his stand upon Christianity, and his whole system of belief is built upon it. He is a sincere Christian believer, without compromise or reserve. To what extent he is orthodox by any ecclesiastical standard we do not certainly know. But he everywhere extols the Christian religion, is jealous for its character and sanctity, dreading to be classed with unbelievers, and going painfully out of his way sometimes to defend himself from imputations of that kind, as in his long note to the Lord Rosse paper. In his tract on the "Essenes," he evinces his zeal for Christianity by attempting to prove that the Essenes were Christians under another name, and not an earlier or a distinct sect; for he sees that Christianity *before* Christ means also Christianity *without* Christ; and in his own words, "If, therefore, Essenism could make good its pretensions, there at one blow would be an end of Christianity, which in that case is not only superseded, as an idle repetition of a religious system already published, but also as a criminal plagiarism." Hence De Quincey to the rescue! not this time, we think, with satisfactory issue, although with bravest knighthood.

We should scarcely be pardoned by those who know and love De Quincey, if we neglected to note here the fine vein of humor which runs through his writings. For, strange as it may appear to those who know him only by his Opium Confessions, and the majority of readers are shut down in their knowledge of him within these limits, he is essentially a humorist, and cannot restrain himself. Humor is in him, and must out. It pervades all his essays, intruding occasionally even into the sacred precincts of sorrow and tragic catastrophe, where clearly it can have no functional rights, and must therefore be a fatal and unpardonable mistake of judgment; but otherwise manifesting itself in a legitimate and endless

variety of forms, now gay and lively, now caustic and severe, now bursting out in multitudinous ringing laughter.

In person he is anything but prepossessing; being diminutive in stature and awkward in his movements, with a shrivelled, yellow, parchment skin. His head, however, is superb, and his face remarkably sensitive and expressive; the eyes sunken, but brilliant with the fire of genius and the illuminations of opium. In manners he is a model of decorum, urbanity, and natural, unaffected gentility. He is a magnificent talker, and a fine reader, — which last quality he notes as a rare accomplishment, whether among men or women. He is genial and hospitable in his household. He performs set tasks of walking, day by day, in his garden, and marks his progress by deposits of stones. He has offered his body, after death, to the surgeons, for dissection, as his contribution to physiological science. He seriously believes that the dreadful gnawing of the stomach already alluded to, which arises perhaps from the collapse and impotency of that organ through the use of opium, is caused by the ravages of a living animal. He is singular in his habits, often disappears from his home for days together, — no inquiry being made after him by his friends, — and returns as mysteriously as he went. He has two daughters, one of whom is married to an officer in the Indian army; the other and eldest presides over the house, and acts as his amanuensis.

ART. V.—1. *Abelard*. Par CHARLES DE RÉMUSAT. Vols. I., II. Paris: Librairie Philosophique de Ladrangé. 1845. 8vo. pp. 509, 563.

2. *Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen oder die Kirchengeschichte in Biographien*, durch FRIEDRICH BÖHRINGER. 2^{ter} Band, 2^{te} Abtheilung. Zurich: Verlag von Meyer und Zeller. 1854. 8vo. pp. 662.

THE second of the above-named works may be dismissed with the general remark, that the volume is in every respect worthy of the series to which it belongs. Beside the biogra-